

JACKSON FLEMING HOUSE (Roberts House)
West end of First Street, driveway
southwest of intersection of Warren
Street and First Street
West Lebanon
Warren County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-232

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86-WLEBA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

JACKSON FLEMING HOUSE
(Roberts House)

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Location: Southwest of intersection of Warren Street and First Street, with driveway at west end of First Street, in West Lebanon, Warren County, Indiana.

USGS West Lebanon Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
16.466920.4457730

Present Owner: Luella Mae Roberts
103 B Edgewood Drive
Attica, Indiana 47918

Present Occupant: Vacant for eight years prior to demolition.

Present Use: Building demolished August 1991.

Significance: The Jackson Fleming House was determined eligible for the National Register because it represented an unusual blend of architectural styles. The two story, square footprint with an asymmetrical floor plan and a strong influence of Italian Villa detailing is unusual for a rural dwelling in central Indiana. The original owner, Jackson Fleming, was the first physician in West Lebanon and owned portions of the land that the town was built on.

PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1865. The estimated date of erection is circa 1865. The source and reason for this estimate is based on the change in value of the property obtained from the Warren County Courthouse records. Also a review of the abstract reflects the transfer of this small tract of land from a larger farm tract. Source of information for determination is abstract of property and Warren County Courthouse records, Williamsport, Indiana.
2. Architect: Not known. All appropriate records were searched and no record of any architect was found. Sources contacted to make determination were Warren County Historical Society; the present Owner, Mrs. Roberts; and the Warren County Courthouse records.
3. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of title and to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Warren County, Warren County Courthouse, Williamsport, Indiana.

A search was made of the original and subsequent owners of the following property situated in Warren County, in the State of Indiana to wit:

Beginning at a point twenty-four (24) rods West and twenty (20) rods South of the Northeast corner of the northwest quarter of Section 13, Township 21 North, Range 9 west, thence west twenty-five (25) rods and one and one half (1 1/2) feet, thence South seven (7) rods and four (4) feet, thence East twenty-five (25) rods, thence North seven (7) rods and four (4) feet, to the place of beginning.

1855 Deed, September 5, 1855, recorded in Deed record #15, page #394, Samuel A. Donahay to Jackson Fleming

1869 Deed, October 8, 1869, recorded in Deed record #25, page #280, Jackson Fleming and Jane H. Fleming to Peter W. Fleming

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- 1894 Deed, November 5, 1894, recorded in Deed record #47, page #204, Peter W. Fleming and Arranna Fleming to James J. Mitchell
- 1897 Deed, October 7, 1897, recorded in Deed record #50, page #65, Laura E. Gillespie and Clara J. Trimble, Executrixes of the last will and testament of James J. Mitchell, to Joel S. Briggs
- 1901 Deed, December 28, 1901, recorded in Deed record #54, page #292, Joel S. Briggs to Benjamin F. Crow
- 1925 Deed, October 27, 1925, recorded in Deed record #72, page #373, Mary J. Lemming, Executrix of Benjamin F. Crow, to Edward B. Smith
- 1929 Deed, January 24, 1929, recorded in Deed record #73, page 145, Edward B. Smith and Ruth M. Smith to Central State Bank
- 1929 Deed, November 8, 1929, recorded in Deed record #73, page #254, Central State Bank of West Lebanon to Farmers Central Bank of West Lebanon
- 1943 Deed, April 14, 1943, recorded in Deed record #76, page #207, Farmers Central Bank to Finley E. Mow
- 1946 Deed, April 29, 1946, recorded in Deed record #77, page #217-218, Finley E. Mow to Glen J. Roberts and Luella Mae Roberts
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown. A search was made of all local historical records, including newspapers, courthouse records, and interviews with the present owner and local historians. None of these sources know of the builder or the contractor. One local historian did indicate that he feels that the bricks were made on the construction site; however, this is just his best estimate and he has no actual knowledge as to the contractor or his methods.
5. Original plans and construction: The original appearance of the property was a two story brick temple form with Italianate details. The front facade is three bays wide with a side entrance, the decorative L-shape porch has segmental arch openings and turned posts. Many of the tall four over four windows with Italianate

influenced segmental arch hoods were flanked by wood shutters.

The original cost of the structure is unknown. All local sources were contacted to try and obtain additional information regarding the plans and construction; however, no additional information could be obtained. Local historians, courthouse records and the present owner were all investigated and researched to obtain information regarding cost, contracts, and original plans. None were obtained.

6. Alterations and additions: The only major change or alteration to the property was the addition of a brick summer kitchen with an estimated alteration date of 1901. This estimated date is based on change in the property values from the Warren County Courthouse record and oral information from the local historical society. No plans were obtained for this alteration and are based on physical evidence only. The owner at the time of the major change was Joel S. Briggs. No known available cost estimates for this alteration. Only other alterations were the modernization of heating, plumbing and electrical work.

B. Historical Context:

This is a general history of the structure based on any available records, including the Warren County Courthouse, Warren County Historical Society, present owner Luella Mae Roberts, and any available newspapers. It should be noted that the Warren County Courthouse burned in 1907 and many of the records were destroyed, making the history somewhat harder to obtain. All efforts were made to obtain any historical information regarding the structure.

No original name of the structure was determined. It has always been referred to simply as a personal residence of whomever was occupying it at the present time.

The estimated date of construction is circa 1865. The actual date is not known. Local historians estimate this date from the town development and the arrival of the railroad. The owner at the time of construction, as evidenced by the chain of title, was Jackson Fleming. Local historians believe that Mr. Fleming was a doctor, and was of some wealth and prominence in the community.

Dr. Fleming was the first physician in West Lebanon. When

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the town moved a mile north when the railroad came through, he, too, became a businessman and erected a large warehouse for general merchandise in the new town in 1857. He owned part of the land on which the new town was located and two

additions bear his name. He lived a long life, dying in Mt. Pleasant, Indiana, in 1913. He was of the Universalist faith, and served a term in the Indiana Senate from Fountain and Warren counties in 1883.

Mr. Fleming used the structure for his personal residence until 1869 when he sold or deeded the property to a family member believed to be his son by the name of Peter W. Fleming.

Local sources do not have knowledge as to the profession of Peter J. Fleming, but do assume that he, too, was a person of some means. Mr. Peter J. Fleming and his wife used this structure as a personal residence until they sold it in 1894 to James J. Mitchell.

It should be noted here that the West Lebanon community was at this time mainly an agricultural based community. Most of the local economy was based on farming, livestock and related merchants such as blacksmith, livery, and dry goods. The economy would have been fairly stable with jobs available in the related fields.

James J. Mitchell occupied the property as his personal residence until his death in 1896. Mr. Mitchell was a widower and died leaving five living children and one deceased son. The children are as follows: daughter Laura Gillespie, daughter Clara J. Trimble, son Eugene, son Henry, daughter Jessie Taylor and deceased son Oscar. Mr. Mitchell left the majority of his estate to his children with the exception of his son Henry and daughter Jessie Taylor. Henry and Jessie were left token amounts due to the fact that he had already made advancements and bestowed favors on them more than equal to their share of his estate.

Daughters Laura Gillespie and Clara J. Trimble were appointed executrixes of his estate and sold the property to Joel S. Briggs in 1897.

Mr. Briggs was also a man of some means and it is during this time period that the alteration to the property was made. Mr. Briggs used the structure as his personal residence and added the summer kitchen. Local historians believe the summer kitchen was added circa 1900-1901.

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On December 28, 1901, Mr. Briggs sold the property to Benjamin F. Crow. It was during the time that Mr. Crow owned the property that a Mr. Cecil Day held his wedding and reception in the subject property. According to the present owner, Mrs. Roberts, the wedding was held in the morning and

the reception followed. The bride evidently ate some tainted food and died of food poisoning before nightfall. Mr. Day eventually married again and raised several children.

Mr. Benjamin Crow's heirs sold the property in 1925 to Edwin B. Smith. Nothing much could be learned about Mr. Smith; however, it can be assumed that the structure was used for the family residence.

In 1929, Mr. and Mrs. Smith deeded the property to the Central State Bank of West Lebanon in lieu of foreclosure. It should be noted here that this was the start of the Depression and it appears that Mr. Smith had fallen on hard times.

Also in 1929, the Central State Bank was purchased by the Farmers Central Bank of West Lebanon and the property was again transferred.

According to all available information, the Farmers Central Bank continued to manage the structure until 1943. Local historians stated that the property was used as rental property during this time period and many families moved in and out. It was also during this time period that the structure started to deteriorate due to lack of upkeep.

The Farmers Central Bank sold the property to Finley E. Mow in 1943. Mr. Mow also continued to use the property as a rental property until he sold it to the present owners.

Mrs. Glen J. Roberts occupied the property until 1983 when she could no longer maintain the property. The structure has continued to set unoccupied since 1983 due to the condition of the property and Mrs. Roberts' inability to make needed repairs.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. General character: This house represents an unusual blend of styles common to Indiana in the 1850's and

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1860's, including Gothic Revival, Italian Villa, and Italianate. (See photos #2-5.)

2. Condition of fabric: The general condition of the structure is poor. The soft brick and mortar have deteriorated at the foundation. The wood porch is in very poor condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two story, three bay front facade with side entrance house has L-shape porch on the east and the north sides. The basic square plan has rear summer kitchen addition. (See floor plan.)
2. Foundations: Rubble stone foundations below grade with brick walls above grade. Approximately 16" thick.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are approximately 12" thick brick made from soft, locally fired brick with lime base mortar. Brick color ranges from orange brown to red orange. The texture is semi-rough with small cracks.
4. Structural System: Exterior walls are load bearing masonry with wood framed interior bearing walls. Floor joists, ceiling joists and roof rafters bear on the north and south exterior walls and interior stud walls.
5. Porches and Stoops: The decorative L-shape porch is wood with segmental arch openings and turned posts with square top and bottom. (See photos #2, 3 & 8.) The side and rear stoops are poured concrete.
6. Chimneys: The house has three chimneys. All are brick masonry. The two story portion has a square chimney up through the center. The oldest one story portion has a rectangular chimney at the west wall and the rear addition has one on the north wall. (See photos #3, 4 & 6.)
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front door is wood, four panel with divided side lights and arched transom. (See photo #8.) The two north side doors in original portion are wood, with two bottom panels and half light in top with an arched top transom. (See photos #3 & 4.) The two doors in rear

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addition are wood with arched header. The side door is four panel, the rear door is two panel with top half light. (See photos #4 & 6.)

- b. Windows and shutters: The windows in the oldest portion are four over four, wood, double hung with arched top sashes and brick segmental-arch hoods. Windows have limestone sills with honed finish and wood shutters are at the second floor windows.

(See photos #2, 3, 7 & 8.) The rear addition has four over four, wood double hung with square upper sash and arched head, except one window that has had the sashes replaced. (See photos #5, 6, & 7.) The window to attic is a wood framed half circle. (See photo #2.)

8. Roofs:

- a. Shape: The roofs are gabled with asphalt shingles. (See photo #3.)
- b. Cornices and eaves: The fascia and soffit are wood with soffit return at the gable ends. No gutters or downspouts exist at this time. (See photos #2, 3, 4, 5 & 6.)
- c. Decorative features: The front gable has a pendant with scrolled trim.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: (See plan sketches and photos #9-15.)
- 2. Stairway: Located along north wall at front entrance. (See photos #10, 14 & 15.)
- 3. Flooring:
 - a. First floor: Flooring type varies from oak narrow plank tongue and groove to oak veneer parquet to sheet vinyl over plywood sheeting. (See photos #9, 10 & 11.)
 - b. Second floor: The floor is approximately 5-1/2" wide tongue and groove painted pine. (See photos #12 & 15.)
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are smooth

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plaster on wood lathe, painted. Some areas have been covered with masonite or paneling. (See photos #9-15.)

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Typical interior doors on first floor are four panel with arched transom and have grooved trim with heavy back banding. (See photo #10.) Typical doors on second floor are two panel with arched transom and have plain smooth trim. (See photos #12 & 15.) Door and trim finish is wood grain faux finish or plain white paint.
- b. Windows: Window trim in front two rooms is grooved with back banding. All trim is painted white. (See photos #9 & 10.)

6. Hardware: The door hardware hinges and latches are cast iron, door knobs are porcelain. (See photo #12.)

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Presently, there is gas, forced air furnace with exposed ductwork up to second floor. Originally stoves used were connected to central chimney at first and second floors.
- b. Lighting: Electrical lighting was probably not installed until 1920's. (See photo #9.)
- c. Plumbing: The only bath room is located in the north west corner of second floor.

D. Site - General Setting and Orientation:

The house is set back from street with driveway along the north property line. (See site plan and photo #1.)

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interview:

- 1. Luella Mae Roberts
July 12, 1991
103 B Edgewood Drive
Attica, Indiana
Present owner

2. Richard Gillespie
July 14, 1991
Williamsport, Indiana
Local historian
3. Walter Salts
August 2, 1991
West Lebanon, Indiana
Local historian

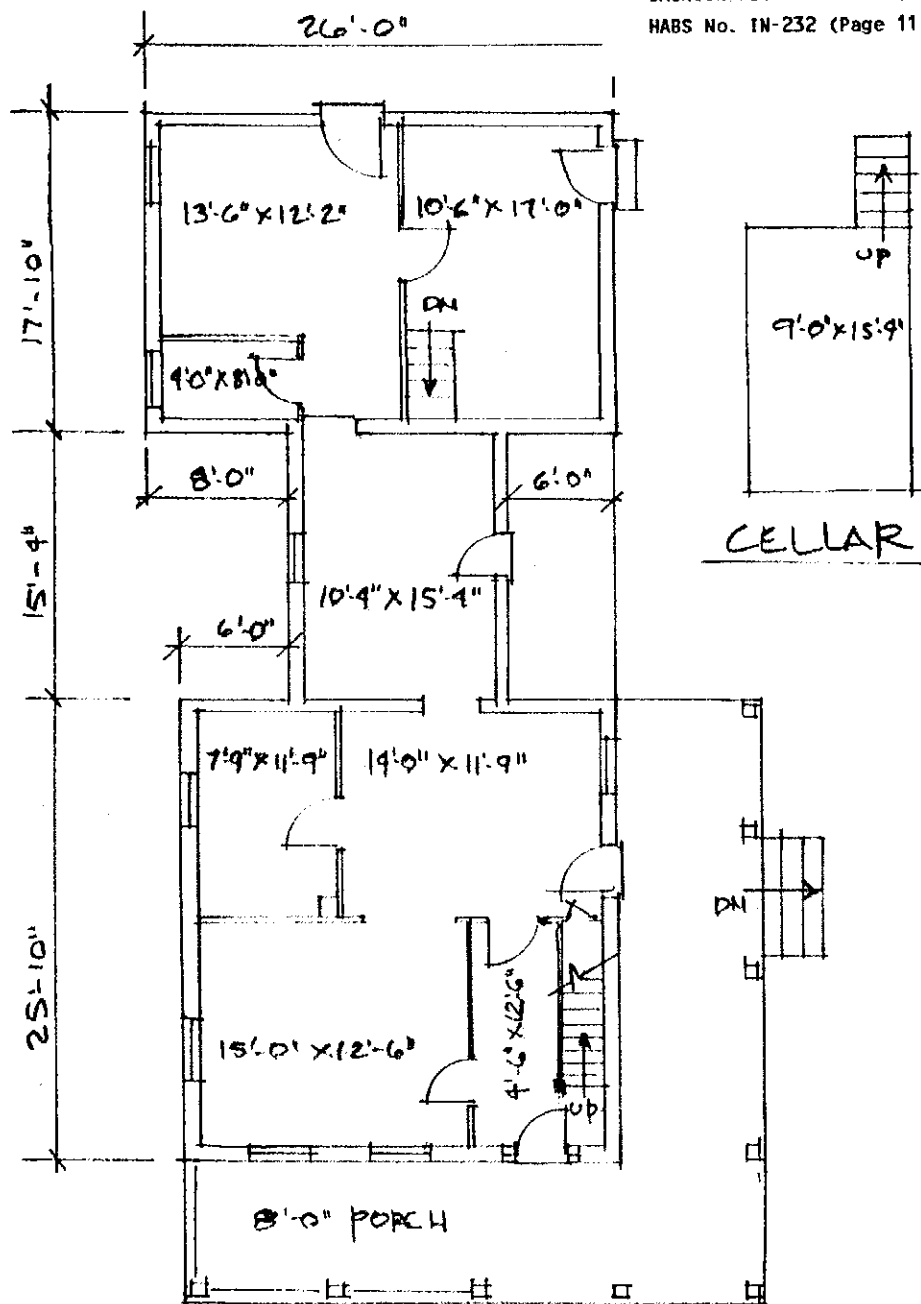
B. Bibliography:

1. Warren County Records, County Courthouse, Williamsport, Indiana, Warren County Records Office, Abstract of Title.
2. Warren County Records, County Courthouse, Williamsport, Indiana, Warren County Treasurers Office, Tax Records.
3. Warren County Historical Society, Williamsport, Indiana. Archival Files.

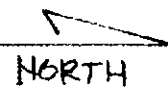
PART IV - PROJECT INFORMATION

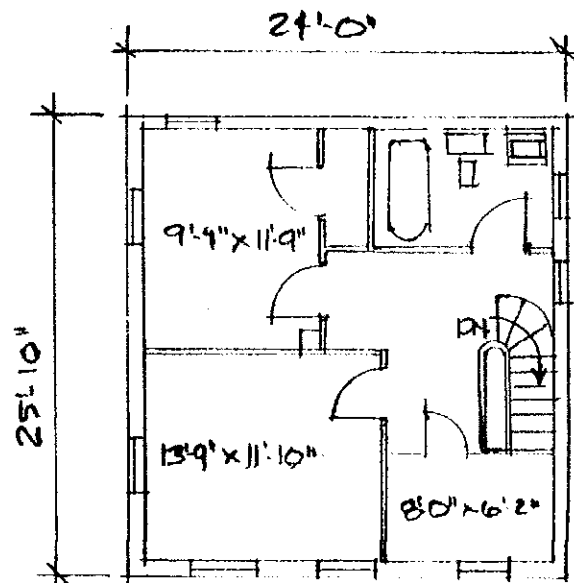
This site has been chosen for a 16 unit senior citizen project because of its location near downtown. This project is to be financed by Farmers Home Administration. The structure is to be demolished in August 1991 after all requirements for the HABS/HAER Documentation have been met.

Prepared by:	Dann Keiser, H.L. Mohler & Associates, P.C.
Title:	Architect
Affiliation:	Historical Consultant
Date:	August 13, 1991



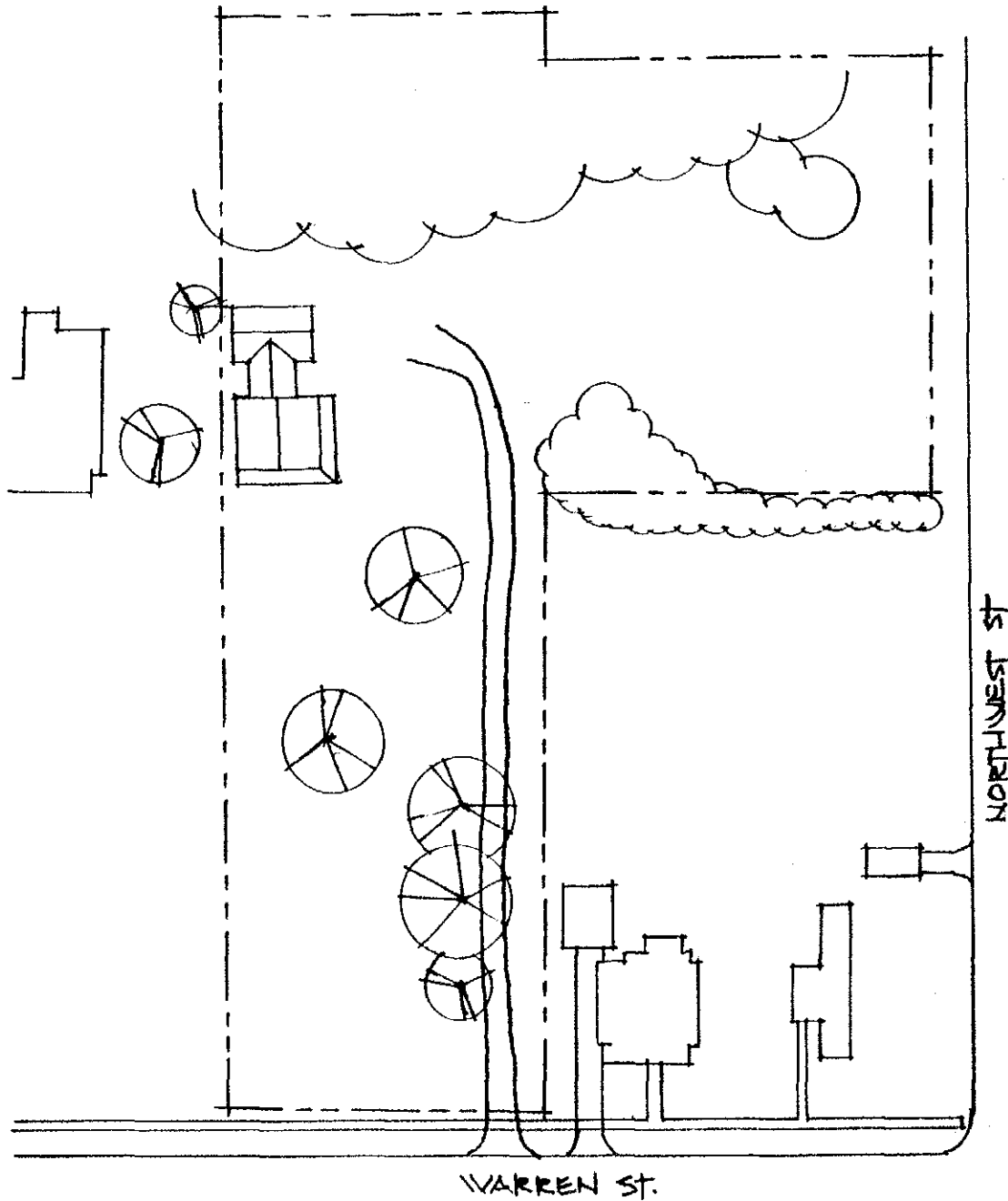
FIRST FLOOR PLAN





SECOND FLOOR PLAN





SITE PLAN
HOUSE LOCATED ON 'L'
SHAPE PROPERTY

